Saskatchewan Education

Parent and Community Partnerships in Education

A Framework

1998

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Saskatchewan Education would like to thank the members of the Parent and Community Involvement Working Committee that met throughout 1995-96. The committee's guidance was invaluable to the department and led to the development of this policy framework.

Members of the Parent and Community Involvement Working Committee:

- Mary Anderson, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
- Ava Bear, Indian and Métis Education Advisory Committee
- Derwyn Crozier-Smith and Bruce Karlenzig, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
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- Dolores Neil, Saskatchewan Association of School Councils
- Mary Reeves, League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents
- Maureen Strawson, Saskatchewan Community Schools Association

In addition, this document draws on the experience and expertise of many different sources, including schools and school divisions. A full list of references is found in Appendix B.

Throughout this policy framework and guide, the term "parent" is used to refer to a child's significant care-giver. This may include a child's mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, or special or legal guardian.

There are a variety of groups active at the school level in Saskatchewan, including:

- *district boards of trustees;*
- *conseils d'écoles;*
- *local school advisory committees;*
- *parent advisory councils;*
- *parent teacher associations; and,*
- *other local advisory groups.*

These school level organizations have varying roles and responsibilities. Saskatchewan Education respects the autonomy of boards of education, schools and parents to develop a structure appropriate to school needs.

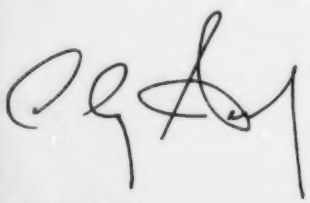
Message from the Minister of Education

Saskatchewan schools reflect our province's proud tradition of cooperation and community. Schools play a vital role in the lives of the children and families they serve and in the communities in which they are located. Traditionally, many schools across the province have operated as "centres of community," welcoming, open and offering a range of educational programs and activities that are the focal point of community life.

In fall 1997, Saskatchewan Education facilitated a public discussion process that asked how parents and community members should be involved in education. Responses indicated that trustees, administrators, educators, parents and community groups recognize the advantages of parent and community partnerships to strengthen the learning program. Saskatchewan people see parents and community involved in a wide array of activities from making sure their children are ready for school each day to participating as a board of education trustee. From volunteering in the classroom to education planning and decision making, parent and community involvement and partnerships increase students' opportunities for success.

The challenge of providing a high quality of education for all children demands cooperative approaches that draw on the commitment, ideas and resources of schools, families, and community members. The education and well-being of our children and young people are shared responsibilities.

Building on our successful programs and activities, through this policy framework I extend an invitation to educators, boards of education, families and communities in Saskatchewan to work together toward the vision provided within.



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Introduction

Educating Saskatchewan's young people and nurturing their healthy development is a complex task. Educators, family and community members all have important roles to play. Their cooperation and commitment to this shared responsibility is key to the success of educational programs and to the well-being and achievement of students.

Today's schools look very different than they did 30 years ago. Demographic, social and economic changes have had a profound impact on the needs of students, the role of schools, the nature of the educational program, and who is involved. To meet the diverse and changing needs of students and to offer high quality educational programming, schools are becoming more open and responsive, working in cooperation with parents and community members. Educators recognize that parents and family members have critical roles to play in supporting learning in the home and in school. As well, community organizations and agencies can make a strong contribution to the range of services and supports provided to enhance student learning.

It takes a village to raise a child.

(African Proverb)

Historically, Saskatchewan's education system, and the considerable successes it has achieved, have been grounded in a tradition of community-based participation and leadership. Locally elected boards of education ensure local input and control. Today, boards of education and schools across the province are using a variety of approaches to enhance partnerships among parents, community members and Aboriginal peoples.

Strengthening parent and community involvement and building partnerships in education is an evolving process. Because each school and its community is unique, with different needs, resources and expectations, the ways in which families and community members are involved and the types of partnerships developed will vary from one school and community to another.

Parent and Community Partnerships in Education encourages educators, school boards, parents and community members to intensify their efforts to work together for the education of Saskatchewan's children. It provides policy and guidelines, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and outlines a range of possible forms of involvement. The objective is to foster cooperation and shared responsibility in providing the best possible learning opportunities for Saskatchewan students.

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The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is the extent to which that student's family is able to:

- *create a home environment that encourages learning;*
- *express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for the child's achievement and future careers; and,*
- *become involved in the child's education at school and in the community.*

(Henderson & Berla, 1994)

Why Parent and Community Partnerships in Education?

Issues

There are a number of compelling reasons to encourage and strengthen parent and community involvement and partnerships in education. These include:

1. **Improving Student Performance and Creating More Effective Education Programs**

   A large body of research demonstrates that children's attitudes toward school, their achievement, attendance, motivation, self-concept, and behaviours are directly influenced by their parents' and families' attitudes towards learning and involvement in their education. For students at risk of school failure, parent involvement in their learning is the key determinant of success.

   Involving families and community members in determining priorities and in developing and delivering programs strengthens and enriches the learning program and contributes to the relevance of students' learning experience.

   All students' learning is enhanced when it is linked to "real life" experience through involvement in the community. Work experience, mentoring and business/school partnerships provide students with the practical and relevant learning opportunities they require as they prepare for adult life.

2. **Fostering Shared Responsibility for the Education and Well-Being of Children**

   Ensuring a high quality of education and life success for children and young people is the shared responsibility of families, schools and communities. For children to succeed academically and become contributing adults, they require a comprehensive and coordinated range of supports that can only be provided by the family, school and community working together interdependently.

Growing numbers of students face barriers to learning, caused by poverty, family instability, child abuse and neglect. These barriers place them at risk, compromising their opportunities for success in school and in life. For some children, there are additional barriers posed by language and culture. Providing the supports students need requires the commitment and support of families, educators, communities, and social and human services agencies.

3. Creating Enhanced Opportunities for Parents, Aboriginal Peoples and other Community Members to Participate in Education.

Saskatchewan's boards of education and the conseil scolaire fransaskois provide an effective system of educational governance to ensure local input and control of education. However, parents, Aboriginal organizations and community groups are asking for a more direct voice in education planning and for more opportunities to be involved in their children's day-to-day experiences at school. Some restructured school divisions are looking for ways to enhance parent and community partnerships in the new, larger school divisions.

4. Strengthening Public Confidence and Accountability

Saskatchewan's education system enjoys strong public support. To honour and maintain trust, the education system is committed to being accountable for its quality of education. When people have input into educational issues, understanding and accountability increase.

Family, school, and community are key elements in the educational process, and all three parts of the system must work together for the educational process to be successful.

(Chevkin, 1993)

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Advantages of Parent and Community Partnerships in Education

There are a number of significant benefits to parent and community involvement and partnerships in education for students, parents, teachers, schools and communities. These include:

When parents are involved at school, not just at home, children do better in school and they stay in school longer. What parents do at home to support learning has a strong, independent effect on children's achievement.

(Henderson & Berla, 1994)

Student Benefits

- improved academic achievement (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1996; Comer, 1984; Epstein, 1988; Kagan, 1984; Human Resources Development Canada, 1994; Snodgrass, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1989);
- enhanced student success in school (Canadian Home and School and Parent Teacher Federation, 1994; Sullivan, 1997);
- higher graduation rates (Henderson & Berla, 1994);
- improved attitudes and behaviour, and increased involvement in classroom learning activities (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Human Resources Development Canada, 1994);
- increased completion of and more positive attitudes toward homework (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Tangri & Moles, 1987);
- higher attendance rates and reduced suspension rates (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Henderson & Berla, 1994);
- greater enrolment in post-secondary education (Henderson & Berla, 1994); and,
- mentoring programs with community members improve student behavioural and academic performance (Guetzlow, 1997; Miller, 1997).

Through being involved in schools, parents develop a greater appreciation of the important role they play in their children's education, a sense of adequacy and self-worth, strengthened social networks, and motivation to resume their own education.

(Davies, 1988)

Parent Benefits

- increased understanding that parents are the primary influences in their children's education (Galen, 1991; Smrekar, 1996);
- increased understanding of the work of schools (Christenson & Cleary, 1990);
- improved communication between parents and their children and parents and teachers (Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation, 1994; Christenson & Cleary, 1990);
- increased involvement of parents in learning activities at home (Christenson & Cleary, 1990);
- encouragement for some parents to return to school to finish their own education (Johnson, 1991); and,
- enhanced parents' attitudes about themselves (Smrekar, 1996).

Not only do parents become more effective as parents, but they become more effective as people. It's a matter of higher self-esteem. Once they saw they could do something about their child's education, they saw they could do something about their housing, their community and their jobs.

(Amundson, 1988)

Teacher Benefits

- increased parental satisfaction with teachers' skills (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Smrekar, 1996);
- greater job satisfaction and fewer requests for transfers (Christenson & Cleary, 1990);
- increased opportunities for staff to spend time on important instructional tasks rather than on behaviour problems (Johnson, 1991);
- increased understanding of the culture of the school and community (Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation, 1994; Johnson, 1991); and,
- increased resources for professional development opportunities through community involvement (Hatch, 1998).

School Benefits

- increased effectiveness of schools (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Slavin, Karweit & Madden, 1989);
- improved school climate through positive community involvement and partnerships (Cromarty, 1997);
- enhanced home-school relationships, especially in positive, proactive ways (Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation, 1994; Christenson & Cleary, 1990);
- increased availability of expertise and information to the school at no extra cost (Hatch, 1998; Wilson & Rossman, 1986); and,
- increased parent and community support of the school (Smith, 1998; Smrekar, 1996; Wilson & Rossman, 1986).

Community Benefits

- increased cost-effectiveness – when services and facilities are pooled, money and people's time are directed toward a common goal;
- skills building – when parents and community members are involved in school activities, they have opportunities to develop their own skills;
- enhanced knowledge of and belief in the power of community's ability to organize and achieve (Hatch, 1998); and,
- strengthened community identity and pride – accomplishment at the school level builds pride. That pride, in turn, spreads throughout the community (McLaughlin, 1993).

Common patterns among schools suggest that community involvement contributes to improvements in:

- ***the physical conditions, resources and constituencies that support learning;***
- ***the attitudes and expectations of parents, teachers, and students; and,***
- ***the depth and quality of the learning experiences in which parents, teachers and students participate.***

(Hatch, 1998)

When schools and communities work together, both are strengthened in synergistic ways and make gains that outpace what either entity could accomplish on its own:

- ***families access community resources more easily;***
- ***businesses connect education programs with the realities of the workplace;***
- ***seniors contribute wisdom and gain a greater sense of purpose; and,***
- ***students serve and learn beyond their school involvement.***

(White, 1998)

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Policy, Vision, Principles and Goals

Policy

The policy of Saskatchewan Education is to promote and facilitate the enhanced participation of parents, community members and Aboriginal peoples in education and the creation of school, parent and community partnerships. Involvement and partnerships include supporting student learning and well-being in the home, in the community, and in the school; setting school goals; solving problems; and sharing resources.

Vision

Parents and community members are actively involved in and share responsibility for the education and well-being of children and young people. They work in partnership with educators to support the achievement of a high quality, academically challenging and culturally-affirming education program and a responsive, inclusive and caring learning environment. Schools are centres of learning for their communities, open and welcoming and the hub of a range of community services and programs that address student needs and strengthen the learning program. There is a high degree of mutual respect and trust, and public confidence in and support for education.

Principles

The following principles guide family and community partnerships in education:

1. **Child-Centred**

   Children and young people are the heart of the school. Their best interests, well-being and education are the focus of all programs and services and of all partnerships.

2. **Family-Focused**

   Parents and caregivers have the right and the responsibility to be partners in their children's education. They are advocates for their children and have valuable information about their children's learning styles and needs. It is recognized that the

family is the primary provider in meeting children's needs and that it must be an active partner in education.

3. Cooperation and Partnership

Educators, students, families, community members and human service agencies work together as partners to support teaching and learning and to provide a responsive and comprehensive range of supports that meet the developmental and learning needs of students. There is shared planning, problem solving and resources.

4. Community

Schools are open and welcoming centres of community. Strong and stable communities are key contributors to the well-being and education of students. By working closely with family and community members, schools and educators foster and strengthen a commitment to and sense of community in their neighborhoods.

5. Equity and Respect for Diversity

Each child, young person and adult has unique potential and capabilities. There is respect for the culture and experience of all involved. All students have the opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to society. The principle goes beyond equality of opportunity where everyone is treated the same, to fostering a barrier-free environment where students benefit equally.

6. Quality and Excellence

Quality is enhanced and excellence becomes an achievable goal as parent and community partnerships strengthen the learning program and opportunities for student success.

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Goals

The goals of family and community involvement and partnerships in education include:

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- *Enhanced Student Learning and Success*
- *Strengthened Education Programs*
- *Shared Responsibility*
- *Strengthened Participation of Aboriginal Peoples*
- *Increased Public Confidence in Education*

1. Enhanced Student Learning and Success

All students have the opportunity and supports they require to achieve their full potential for success.

2. Strengthened Education Programs

Learning programs are academically-challenging, relevant and culturally-affirming.

3. Shared Responsibility

School staff, parents, community members and students are collectively responsible for student success and well-being. This responsibility is demonstrated by the active partnerships with parents and community members in support of learning in the home, school and community, and by a shared understanding of educational issues and school affairs.

4. Strengthened Participation of Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal peoples have ample opportunity to take an active role in their children's education through a variety of partnerships and shared management arrangements.

5. Increased Public Confidence in Education

Through greater understanding and appreciation of education issues and achievements, families and communities have increased confidence in and satisfaction with school operations and programs.

Understanding Parent and Community Partnerships in Education

The Scope of Parent and Community Partnerships

There are many ways that parents and community members can be involved in education. The type of involvement and partnership will vary from one school division to another and from school to school depending on local needs and circumstances. Involvement and partnerships range from activities in the home and community in support of students and learning, through to participation in education planning, problem solving and governance.

All types of involvement are valuable; furthermore the expanded role that parents and community are playing improves not only the performance of individual children, but also the quality of the school.

(Collins, 1995)

Each type of involvement and partnership is valued and important. Involvement at all levels contributes to the goal of shared ownership for the education and well-being of students.

The following continuum outlines the scope of parent and community involvement and partnership activities and responsibilities. The categories of activity outlined on the continuum represent progressively greater levels of collaboration, shared responsibility and participation in decision making. **All categories of involvement and partnership are important and valued** and each builds upon the other.

The categories of the continuum include:

1. **Meeting the Basic Needs of Children and Young People**

   Parents provide the supports and create an environment in the home that meets their children's basic needs for health, safety, nurturing, nutrition and housing. Communities contribute to the development of safe, stable and supporting environments for young people.

2. **Developing Openness and Two-Way Communication**

   Effective two-way communication between the school and its families and community is the foundation upon which all other types of parent and community involvement and partnership are based. Effective communication ensures that family and community members feel welcome in the school and in school activities. It also permits information sharing about children's needs and development and about programs and issues in the school.

Goals

The goals of family and community involvement and partnerships in education include:

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3. Supporting Learning at Home and in the Community

Parents and communities work to create an environment that supports learning. Families motivate learning through example, encouragement and discussion. They foster self-discipline and positive values. Community agencies and individuals recognize and respect the needs and contributions of young people and contribute to their well-being. They support education as preparation for adult life.

4. Participating in Voluntary and Advisory Roles

Parents and community members become involved in the life of the school as spectators in school events, volunteers in support roles and by providing advice on school programs, priorities, supports to learning and policies. Volunteer opportunities may include fund raising, tutoring students, assisting in the library, guest speaking, and extra-curricular program development.

Trust develops in organizations when competent participants make sincere efforts to understand each other and to respect opinions. Clarifying expectations avoids misunderstandings, and keeping commitments promotes trust. But integrity in the face of conflict and honesty in word and deed are its foundation.

(Covey, 1989)

5. Building Collaboration and Partnerships

Collaborative efforts and partnerships are developed with parents and the community to strengthen and enhance school programs and to coordinate the range of services required by students and their families.

6. Participating in Decision Making and Governance

Formal structures are established to enable parents and community members to participate in school planning and problem solving in advisory or governance roles. These roles are supported by leadership development and training.

> ***A Point to Remember!***
>
> Effective parent and community involvement and partnerships are qualitatively different than a single program or activity. They require a committed perspective that permeates all activities in the school and school division. The overall attitude and culture is welcoming and inclusive.

Trust develops in organizations when competent participants make sincere efforts to understand each other and to respect opinions. Clarifying expectations avoids misunderstandings, and keeping commitments promotes trust. But integrity in the face of conflict and honesty in word and deed are its foundation.

(Covey, 1990)

3. Supporting Learning at Home and in the Community

Parents and communities work to create an environment that supports learning. Families motivate learning through example, encouragement and discussion. They foster self-discipline and positive values. Community agencies and individuals recognize and respect the needs and contributions of young people and contribute to their well-being. They support education as preparation for adult life.

4. Participating in Voluntary and Advisory Roles

Parents and community members become involved in the life of the school as spectators in school events, volunteers in support roles and by providing advice on school programs, priorities, supports to learning and policies. Volunteer opportunities may include fund raising, tutoring students, assisting in the library, guest speaking, and extra-curricular program development.

5. Building Collaboration and Partnerships

Collaborative efforts and partnerships are developed with parents and the community to strengthen and enhance school programs and to coordinate the range of services required by students and their families.

6. Participating in Decision Making and Governance

Formal structures are established to enable parents and community members to participate in school planning and problem solving in advisory or governance roles. These roles are supported by leadership development and training.

A Point to Remember!

Effective parent and community involvement and partnerships are qualitatively different than a single program or activity. They require a committed perspective that permeates all activities in the school and school division. The overall attitude and culture is welcoming and inclusive.

Continuum of Parent and Community Involvement and Partnerships

All forms of Parent and Community Involvement and Partnerships are important and valued. Each builds upon the other.

	Meeting Basic Needs	**Developing Openness and Two-Way Communication**	**Supporting Learning at Home and in Community**	**Participating in Voluntary and Advisory Roles**	**Building Collaboration and Partnerships**	**Participating in Governance**

Examples of Activities and Programs	***At home...***
	• safe, caring home environment
	• adequate food, clothing, rest and shelter
	
	In school/ community...
	• nutrition programs
	• clothing exchanges
	• "safe rooms"
	• parenting education
	• community kitchens
	• home-school liaison
		At home...
		• advise teacher of students' likes and dislikes, changes to routine, etc.
		• discuss concerns and successes with the teacher
		• review information sent home from school
		• attend meetings and school events
		
		In school/community...
		• welcoming school environment
		• parent, student, teacher conferences
		• school newsletters
		• home visits
		• surveys of parent opinion
		• message board advertising school events and activities
		• newspaper columns
			At home...
			• being interested in and encouraging children's learning
			• creating a place to study/work
			• reading to children
			• learning about curriculum
			• making learning part of everyday life – baking, driving, shopping
			
			In the community...
			• mentoring
			• creating safe, stable communities
			
			In the school...
			• family literacy programs
			• assignments that encourage parent/family involvement
			• learning contracts among parents, teachers and students
			• summer/holiday learning projects
				• attending/assisting with school events
				• fund raising
				• volunteering – classroom, field trip, library, lunchroom etc.
				• room for volunteers/ parents
				• storytelling/guest speakers
				• tutoring students
				• newsletter coordination
				• leading clubs – drama, gardening, photography, computers
				• parent centres
				• providing advice on school issues/programs
				• advising on policy issues such as school code of conduct, student discipline, curriculum, program adaptations, schedules, etc.
					• financial and "in kind" contributions
					• business partnerships & sponsorships
					• integrated services
					• community development
					• youth community service/work experience
					• in-school daycare
					• early intervention preschool
					• shared facilities
					• adopt-a-school
					• community service work
						• planning, problem solving
						• making decisions about:
						  • budget
						  • program adaptations
						  • priorities
						  • criteria for staff and/or staffing
						  • school facilities
						• training in leadership and decision making skills
						• program assessment
						• shared management of project, program or school
						• partnerships with Aboriginal peoples, organizations and governments

Structure	• self-help groups • school level organizations – parent teacher association, parent council, school council, home and school association • community association • school-community liaison program	• school-community liaison program • school level organizations – parent teacher association, parent council, school council, home and school association • community association • district board of trustees/conseil d'école	• school-community liaison program • school level organizations – parent teacher association, parent council, school council, home and school association • district board of trustees/conseil d'école • community association	• volunteer programs • school level organizations – parent teacher association, parent council, school council, home and school association • district board of trustees/conseil d'école • community association	• advisory committees • interagency committees • school level organizations – parent teacher association, parent council, school council, home and school association • district board of trustees/conseil d'école	• school councils, parent advisory council, school community council • district board of trustees/conseil d'école • co-management board • associate schools • board of education/conseil scolaire fransaskois
	----------→ **Increased collaboration with educators, shared responsibility for education, and participation in decision making** ----------→					

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities outlined below provide insight into what is needed from different people to ensure successful parent and community involvement and partnerships in education. Given that these partnerships are evolving, **the roles are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive.** They describe developing expectations, while being flexible to take into account variations from one school and community to another.

Roles and Responsibilities Outlined in The Education Act, 1995

The Education Act, 1995 outlines the responsibilities of four separate bodies:

Establishing new relationships requires listening, creating a climate of respect and trust and coming to understand the mutual benefits that will ensue if partnership relationships are firmly established.

(Peters, 1991)

1. **Boards of Education** (and the Conseil scolaire fransaskois)

   - administer the school division budget;
   - maintain and staff schools;
   - transport pupils; and,
   - supervise the school program.

   As well, boards of education have the right to levy property taxes in order to fulfill their responsibilities.

2. **District Boards of Trustees**

   In every school division that is divided into school districts (most rural school divisions), each school district is required to have a district board of trustees. Roles, responsibilities and operation are specified in sections 120 – 134 of *The Education Act*. Boards of Trustees:

   - provide advice to the board of education; and,
   - make recommendations to the board of education concerning school facilities, language of instruction, and religious education.

   The legislation also states that district boards of trustees may administer any function delegated by the board of education

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3. Conseils d'écoles

Each fransaskois school must have a conseil d'école. Membership, roles, responsibilities and operations of the conseils d'écoles are specified in sections 134.1 – 134.4 of *The Education Act*. The conseil d'école:

- provides advice to the conseil scolaire;
- participates in activities pertaining to the future planning and development of educational services;
- makes recommendations to the conseil scolaire with respect to facilities and approves arrangements respecting religious instruction in the fransaskois school; and,
- promotes school-community and parent-teacher communications.

The legislation also states that conseils d'écoles may administer any function delegated by the conseil scolaire fransaskois.

4. Local School Advisory Committees

In every school division that is not divided into school districts (usually urban school divisions), at the discretion of the board of education, schools may establish local school advisory committees. Roles, responsibilities and operation are specified in sections 135 – 140 of *The Education Act*. These committees act in an advisory capacity to the board of education and carry out a number of duties subject to the approval of the board.

Electors in a rural school district may petition the board of education to establish a local school advisory committee if they wish. If such a committee is established, the district board of trustees ceases to exist.

Other types of parent and community groups are operating in many schools. These include Parent Councils, Community School Councils, Home and School Associations, PTAs (Parent-Teacher Associations), and various other organizations. Such groups are not provided for in the legislation and their role is based on past practice and negotiated arrangements with the board. In most cases, their relationship with the principal and school staff is supportive and advisory. They assist with school activities, provide advice in specific areas, and raise funds on behalf of the school.

Effective schools and school systems foster the active involvement of their communities in program delivery and school governance.

(Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, 1993c)

Roles and Responsibilities in Support of Parent and Community Involvement and Partnerships

In addition to the roles and responsibilities outlined in the Act, the following suggestions are provided to strengthen parent and community partnerships:

1. Role of the Board of Education/Conseil scolaire fransaskois

Boards of education and the conseil scolaire fransaskois have a critical role to play in encouraging parent and community involvement and partnerships. Commitment from the board is needed to ensure a comprehensive, system-wide approach.

The board of education:

- recognizes that parent and community partnerships are critical to the success of students and responsiveness in the learning program;
- develops system-wide policies and supports, promoting and facilitating parent and community involvement;
- develops policy and guidelines for parent and community involvement and partnership activities and structures, including clearly defined statements of purpose, roles, responsibilities and authority;
- establishes conflict resolution mechanisms and appeal procedures;
- provides information in a timely manner to family and community members to facilitate their effective participation and decision making; and,
- when necessary, negotiates with parent and community organizations and district boards/conseils d'écoles to permit shared responsibilities and authorities beyond the advisory functions.

2. School Division Administration

Working closely with schools, the school division administration:

- carries out a number of activities to support parent and community involvement and partnerships, including:

- publicly promoting parent and community involvement and partnerships, and
- developing recruitment and recognition strategies and programs;

- develops training and inservice opportunities and support materials for parents and community members on topics such as communications, group processes, running effective meetings, needs assessment, creative problem-solving, conflict resolution and planning; and,

- ensures the effective functioning of school level organizations, such as local school advisory committees, parent councils and district boards of trustees.

3. Role of the Principal

The principal is the instructional leader in the school. In addition to the many administrative and educational tasks, he or she encourages and facilitates parent and community involvement and partnerships. This requires values and skills in collaboration, group interaction and problem solving. A strong commitment to the development of parent and community partnerships is essential.

The principal:

- recognizes that parent and community partnerships are critical to the success of students and responsiveness in the learning program;

- works closely with school level organizations, recognizes and encourages potential leaders and works with the group to ensure membership reflects the population of the school;

- identifies and develops partnerships with community agencies, mobilizing resources and supports;

- actively participates in the school level organization;

- encourages the involvement of parents and community members who have traditionally been under-represented, such as Aboriginal peoples and people living in poverty;

- provides leadership and encouragement to staff regarding the adoption and continuous use of welcoming and inclusive approaches, and facilitates staff development opportunities related to parent and community partnerships;

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All members of the partnership must take individual responsibility for bringing about change, or it will not happen, say futurists. Change requires "new leadership" attitudes and values where all the participants collaborate as a team.

(Covey, 1989)

The principal provides leadership in a variety of ways: by initiating dialogue concerning expectations and school-wide goals, by ensuring that decision-making takes place at the local level, by establishing efficient planning procedures, by encouraging parental and community involvement, and by managing and controlling the facility.

(Excerpt from *Directions*, Saskatchewan Education, 1984)

- works with school level organization to provide leadership development and capacity-building activities for parents and community members, when required;

- institutes and maintains a full range of activities and approaches to ensure parent and community involvement and partnerships; and,

- oversees and retains responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school.

4. Role of Teachers

Teachers' primary responsibilities are to plan, facilitate and evaluate students' learning. Partnerships with parent and community members can make a strong contribution to the learning program. To encourage and facilitate parent and community involvement, teachers:

The strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and at home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage and guide parent involvement.

(Dauber & Epstein, 1993)

- develop their knowledge and understanding of the community within which they are working and of the educational needs of the students they teach;

- initiate and develop effective two-way communication and liaison with parents and the home through a variety of formal and informal means;

- actively welcome and invite parents and community members into the classroom and identify opportunities for them to make a meaningful contribution;

- work cooperatively with parents, community members, human services professionals and others involved in the school to achieve excellence in the learning program and to meet the varied needs of students;

- have representation on school level organizations such as local school advisory committees, parent teacher associations, school councils, home and school associations and work with parents and community members in planning school events and addressing issues; and,

- commit to regular professional development in the areas of enhanced parent and community involvement, partnerships in education and cultural responsiveness.

5. Role of Parents and Family Members

The family makes critical contributions to student achievement, from earliest childhood through high school. Efforts to improve children's outcomes are much more effective if they encompass their families.

(Henderson & Berla, 1994)

Parents play a key role in the success of students and the school. They are advocates for their children and can provide valuable information on individual student learning styles and needs. Their interest in and support for the learning process is critical to student success.

Parents and family:

- provide for their children's basic physical, emotional, psychological and cultural needs so that their children are ready to learn;
- create a home environment in which learning is supported and encouraged;
- communicate regularly with teachers about their children's interests, needs and learning;
- are actively involved in their children's learning and participate in school programs and activities, providing input and support to the extent that they are able; and,
- participate in groups and activities for the purpose of providing advice and supports about the school issues, policies and programs.

The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement.

(Fullan, 1991)

Some parents may require school and/or community support with these responsibilities.

6. Role of Students

Students are the heart of the school and the focus of its programs and services. They:

- take responsibility for communicating with their parents about their learning and the activities of the school, ensuring that family members are informed about school activities and issues and that school newsletters and notes are delivered;
- encourage and welcome their parents' participation in the school and respect the contribution of parents and community members;
- participate in activities organized by parents, such as clubs and tutoring programs; and,

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- participate in activities organized by parents, such as clubs and tutoring programs; and,

- contribute to the positive, open and welcoming climate of their school.

7. Roles of Community Members, Human Service Agencies, Community Groups and Business

If the school, the home, the community and the Church work together, it creates a common sense of value and understanding and purpose around what we are doing that forms a type of "social capital." This social capital, in turn, leads to increased student success in school. Consequently, working together is part of building a community with a greater capacity for learning.

Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, 1993a)

Community members and organizations, including human service providers, Aboriginal organizations, cultural organizations, family service centres, churches, service clubs and businesses have a role to play in supporting students' learning and their physical, emotional and psychological well-being. The role of these organizations focuses on forming partnerships with the school for the benefit of the students, the learning program and the school community.

Community members:

- work with the school staff, school level organizations and parents in providing a range of supports, including expertise, financial and human resources and services to meet the diverse needs of the students and their families;
- provide a safe and caring community surrounding the school;
- respect the values and rules of the school; and,
- maintain the confidentiality of student records or other personal and confidential information obtained while working or participating in the school.

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Next Steps

The document provides a policy, vision, principles, goals, roles and responsibilities that affirm practice and provide a framework for discussion of an expanded role for parent and community partnerships in education. Saskatchewan Education will continue to work closely with its partners to provide print and inservice supports to boards, educators, family and community members as we work toward the vision provided in this document.

Appendix A: Definitions

Collaboration – collaboration among different people and organizations is the most sophisticated level of cooperative or partnership relationship. It is a more intensive and jointly planned effort by people or organizations over a mutual concern that results in a mutually-desired outcome. It is a relationship in which the parties share common goals, mutual commitments, resources, decision making, and evaluation responsibilities. It involves a common goal with a clearly articulated and shared commitment that is within the scope of the general goals of the collaborating agencies (Swan and Morgan, 1993).

Community – refers to a group of people bound together through mutual interest and sense of shared destiny. The "boundaries" can be geographical (a neighbourhood, school, town, city or region) or non-geographical (such as an interest group dispersed across the province, workplace, business organization or cultural association). Communities are self-defining.

Community Development – community development is an educational and motivational process that engages community members and organizations and empowers them to participate actively in improving the quality of their lives.

Cooperation – interagency cooperation is a process of working together informally to achieve the day-to-day goals of the organization. It represents a superficial level of agency interaction. Agencies are aware of one another and interact to provide general information, support, or referrals.

Coordination – coordination is characterized by deliberate joint and often formalized relations for achieving shared or compatible goals. It involves establishing a common understanding of the services committed to and provided by each agency and by determining each agency's accountability and responsibility to specific groups. Interagency coordination differs slightly from cooperation, but represents a more sophisticated level of interagency interaction. It is a process of engaging in various efforts that alter or smooth the relationships of independent organizations, staffs, or resources. It involves establishing a common understanding of the services committed to and provided by each agency and by determining each agency's accountability and its responsibility to specific groups. Unnecessary duplication is identified and eliminated; resources are shifted and reallocated to fill voids and gaps in the service system (Swan and Morgan, 1993).

Family – families have many forms and it is the family relationships that are critical to a child's well-being. A family can be defined as any combination of two or more persons bound together by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption/placement and who, together, assume responsibility for variant combinations of some of the following: physical maintenance and care of group members; addition of new members through procreation or adoption; socialization of children; social control of members; production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services; and affective nurturing.

Governance – institutional structures and processes for decision making related to policy development, policy implementation, resource allocation, curriculum development and implementation, instructional planning, priority setting and so on.

Integrated School-Linked Services – Integrated School-Linked Services initiatives use collaborative processes to forge partnerships among school divisions, schools, their communities, Aboriginal organizations, and provincial and community human service agencies. The purpose is to identify new approaches to planning and new configurations of service delivery which are more coordinated, comprehensive, and responsive in addressing the complex and diverse needs of students and families at risk. Implementation of Integrated School-Linked Services requires significant change in existing systems and structures, as well as in attitudes and values. There is shared leadership, planning, decision making, resources, and evaluation (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 1994).

Integrated School-Linked Services are intended to facilitate the participation of health, social services, justice, recreation, and other service providers in participation with school personnel to address student needs which are beyond the professional mandate of educators. Their participation impacts on the role of the school, and the roles and relationships of school administrators and teachers as they share in the collaborative effort.

Parent – is used to refer to a child's significant care-giver. This may include a child's mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, foster parent or other guardian.

Participation – the people involved in or impacted by an issue or initiative have a share in the planning and the outcome with government.

Partnership – partnership means a shared commitment to pursue agreed upon goals jointly and in a coordinated manner. Joint planning and shared decision making are characteristics of an effective partnership.

In an institutional context, partnerships are systems of formalized cooperation, grounded in legally binding arrangements or informal understandings, cooperative working relationships, and mutually adopted plans among a number of institutions. They involve agreements on policy and program objectives and the sharing of responsibility, resources, risks, and benefits over a specified period of time (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development).

Policy – a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions. A policy is a set of strategies designed to achieve a desired state of affairs (specific objectives). It is a concrete expression of values, which involves the distribution of resources and power. A policy has three components: objectives, strategies, and outcomes.

Site-Based Management – an attempt to transform schools into communities where the appropriate people participate constructively in major decisions that affect them.

Appendix B: References

Below is a complete list of references consulted during preparation of this document.

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